DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 660 SO 018 864

AUTHOR Gregory, Alan
TITLE The Media as a Source for School Economics Curriculum.
PUB DATE 6 Dec 87
NOTE 43p.; Paper presented at the Conference of the Joint Australian Association for Research in Education and New Zealand Association for Research in Education (Christchurch, New Zealand, December 3-6, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Economics; *News Media; News Reporting; Secondary Education; Social Science Research; Social Studies; *Television; Television Research; Television Surveys
IDENTIFIERS Australia (Melbourne)

ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to examine the issue of whether discipline-derived economics courses enhance student societal understanding. News and current affairs programs on Melbourne television throughout 1986 were surveyed, and the economic concepts and issues involved were examined. Of the 125 programs that comprised the sample, 90 (72%) were news and 35 (28%) were current affairs. The programs were content analyzed. Findings indicated that: (1) 108 programs had economic items as a major category; (2) these programs comprised 86 news programs and 22 current affairs programs; and (3) a feature of this coverage was that the economic terms and concepts were rarely explained. Sixty senior students participated in a short pilot study to assess their comprehension and understanding of the economics items in the news. The teacher reported that: (1) students were surprised at the extent of the economic items in the news; (2) they realized that their recall of news items was short term; (3) they achieved a low level of understanding; and (4) they felt the items were not explained. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED291660

THE MEDIA AS A SOURCE FOR SCHOOL ECONOMICS CURRICULUM

Alan Gregory

Senior Lecturer in Education

Monash University

Australia

Abstract

Economics in the secondary school curriculum is justified on grounds related to better understanding society. Do discipline derived courses meet this social goal? An analysis of the media helps to identify economic concepts and issues in society today. This paper reports a survey of news and current affairs programmes on Melbourne television over 1986 and an examination of the economic concepts and issues involved.

Paper presented to the Joint Australian Association for Research in Education, and New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand, 3-6 December 1987.

SO018864

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Dr. Alan Gregory

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Introduction

In a world where the economic dimension to life seems to be for ever growing in importance, the case for teaching economics in schools becomes stronger. Young people will be better able to understand and function in this world if they have some knowledge of economics. The term "economic literacy" is often used to highlight the case for teaching economics in schools and to claim a guaranteed place in the already crowded curriculum. Because the economic dimension to modern life is so persuasive, economic questions and issues cannot be avoided. If young people are not able to have a basic understanding of economics they will be confused and misinterpret much of the world around them.

The media becomes important in a consideration of the economics curriculum. Firstly the media in its presentation of issues and events makes the avoidance of economics almost impossible. Secondly the media reflects and portrays the issues and events that make up and concern society and so is constantly spelling out an economics agenda. Thirdly the media becomes an important source of materials to stimulate economic thinking with which economics can be taught.

The case for using the media as a teaching method in economics is a strong one. (Bell & Gregory, 1980, Gregory, 1982) All kinds of source materials - newspaper cuttings of current economic events, television news or feature programmes, cartoons, statistical data, and historical material - can be profitably used to add interest and relevance to the economics lesson. What is being examined in this study though is the nature of economics portrayed by the media, with the idea of using this analysis to assist in the development of economics curricula.

The eminent U.S. economist J.K. Galbraith said in 1978

> "The newspaper headlines, when they escape from sex and the Middle East are largely concerned with economic decisions of government."
>
> (Galbraith 1978, p.16)

Weisbrod has lamented the lack of research in economic education in non school settings such as the media, reminding economists that

> "The vast majority of people have not taken and never will take a formal economics course in any school, and they will be exposed to economics only through such informal media."
>
> (Weisbrod 1978, p.12)

The tendency in our courses is to justify the course from social needs, yet to determine the course by reference to the discipline itself which may not reflect these needs. That there is a gap between purposes and practice is indicated by Gilbert's examination of a number of social science subjects. Gilbert (1984) shows how the image of society presented in textbooks and syllabuses is incompatible with the emancipatory and egalitarian ethos and rhetoric by which the subjects are justified in the curriculum. This finding is especially pertinent given that researchers and curriculum developers continually lament their failure to produce active, informed, participating and effective citizens.

An operational definition of basic economic understanding or "economic literacy" is elusive (Hansen, 1977) although the search for effective economics education (requiring the use and retention of economics learning) has brought Wentworth (1976) and others (Dunn, 1983) to the notion of economic efficacy.

Economics curricula for schools are largely determined by course committees - reflecting the views of teachers, economists and in some cases people from the business and trade union communities. Sometimes they are assisted by national surveys or reports such as, in the USA, the reports of the Joint Council on Economic Education, (e.g. Saunders et al. Master Curriculum Guide in Economics, 1984) or in Australian surveys such as conducted by Wilkes (1978) for the Australian Chamber of Commerce or more recently Framework documents of the Victorian Ministry

of Education. By their nature these people, aided by reports and surveys reflect social issues as well as the discipline economics in their course construction work.

What is being suggested here is a more direct recognition of economic issues in the media, as a means of more adequately reflecting current social concerns in courses. Most people in referring to the media have in mind three elements of the mass media - newspapers, radio and television. (McLuhan, 1977 has a wider interpretation of media - describing sixteen forms) Although television is the newest of the principal media, it commands the greatest attention of all the media forms.

Studies suggest that the average adult in Britain spends 75 hours per week with the four major areas of the mass media - television, radio, newspapers and magazines (Tunstall, 1983).

Australian data (from McNair Anderson surveys) suggest that in Australia women would view 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours of television per week, men 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours, teenagers 20 hours and children under 13 years, 18 hours per week. The potential to view is greater in Australia too, with some 445 hours of television transmission a week compared with around 200 hours per week in the U.K. and in Europe.

Put another way between 30%-45% of our children are regularly watching television between 5.00 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. most week nights.

Surveys (McNair Anderson Surveys as reported in TV Basics 1985) indicated that in 1985, in Melbourne 29 hours 51 minutes were spent viewing T.V. in each home weekly. Teenagers spent 18 hours per week, and children under 12 years 14 hours 20 minutes per week viewing television.

Dunn's study of primary school children suggested that the children in question indicated that the television was the main source of their economic knowledge, parents, newspapers and the school being the next most important sources. (Dunn, 1983, p.147)

The point of a more conscious "source materials approach" and of more deliberate study of the media is to make use of what is there. As Wood (1985) observes "most people are exposed to a great deal more information about economics through news coverage than through all their classroom experience." Young people are bombarded with economic concepts, and are receiving through media exposure some form of economic education. With some conscious and logical economics training this bombardment can make sense, be put to better use, and serve as examples of the economic theory and concepts being enunciated.

Some writers recognise that the message is quite different for those with the appropriate knowledge. Russe'l (1985) states:

> "When individuals are cued to recall information and when that informaton connects with other personally relevant knowledge, then the mental structures are ready to accept the new information and incorporate it into the general body of personal knowledge".

It was also important to extend the research to television because of its high regard held for its news coverage.

An Australian Broadcasting Tribunal survey (1978) suggests that Television is regarded by most people (63%) as giving the best news coverage, ahead of the radio and newspapers. (A similar result (62%) was found in a British Survey by the IBA.) Those people also felt the news was accurate (61%) and of sufficient detail (73%). The feeling was clear, of an uncritical acceptance of Television news, in contrast to the perceptions of critics of a news credibility problem. (Smith, 1973) Although the situation is complicated by the differing satisfactions or gratifications different viewers have of the news people do not view the news in the same way. (Agardy, 1980)

Following a preliminary study, a survey was undertaken over the 1983-84 financial year of the economic content and concepts in a Melbourne newspaper. A random sample of 120 editions of the Age were subject to content analysis and the results are reported elsewhere. (Gregory, 1986) The 5546 economic items found in the 120 papers pointed to a very large economics content. There was not only a significant amount of economics found, but covering a wide range of economic items. While three main groups of items predominated - industrial relations (strikes and disputes) the overall state and regulation of the economy, and "hip pocket nerve" items (pensions, unemployment benefits, taxes and welfare) - there was a spread over a wide range of economics. Table 1 shows that over 60% of the economic items were found in the first five pages of the newspaper.

Table 1

Economic Terms by Category

(Age Survey 1983-84)

	CATEGORIES	TERMS*
1.	Basic terms and concepts	904
2.	Production, consumption and investment	885
3.	Population and labour	159
4.	Industrial relations	1347
5.	Overseas section	246
6.	Money and finance	264
7.	Role of Government	1574
8.	Comparative economic systems	99
		6478**

** (Double counting of items belonging to more than one category hence total exceeds the 5546 which was counted for single items.)

* (Only first mention of a term or item in an article is recorded.)

The Study

Following this study of the newspaper economics, the ability to read a daily newspaper (of reasonable standard) intelligently could well be a working definition of economic literacy. Given the dominance of television over newspapers the next step was to move in this direction. Hence this study was one of the economics content of news and current affairs programmes on Melbourne television over 1986. A sample of programmes was taken over the year, varying the channel, night taken, and the balance between news and current affairs programmes. Of the 125 programmes viewed that comprised the sample, 90 (72%) were news and 35 (28%) were current affairs. Tables 2 and 3 indicate the range of programmes and channels in the study. The 125 programmes represent almost 70 hours of viewing time.

Table 2

Programmes in Study

	Number of Programmes	% of Programmes
ABC NEWS	18	14.4
DAY BY DAY	9	7.2
CHANNEL 7 NEWS	19	15.2
CHANNEL 9 NEWS	17	13.6
WILLESSEE	9	7.2
SIXTY MINUTES	5	4.0
7.30 REPORT	5	4.0
EYE WITNESS NEWS	17	13.6
SBS WORLD NEWS	18	14.4
4 CORNERS	3	2.4
OTHER *	5*	4.0
	125	100.0

*Includes: PM's address to nation on economy
Behind the News, Investigating, etc.

Table 3

Programmes by Channel

	No.	%
SBS	18	14.4
CHANNEL 7	33	26.4
CHANNEL 2	28	22.4
CHANNEL 9	27	21.6
CHANNEL 10	19	15.2
	125	100.0

Items were coded into principal categories following Atwater's classification of news topics. Atwater used a ten category classification.

1. Economics and Business
2. Government/Politics
3. Education
4. Human Interest
5. Crime/Courts
6. Social Conflict/Welfare
7. Health Medical
8. Accident
9. Religion
10. Other

This classificaton had to be expanded slightly to allow for advertisements, news headlines, Tattslotto etc. and the classifications used are shown in Table 4 together with the number.

Table 4

Classifications of Items

		No.	%
1.	ACCIDENTS	89	4
2.	HUMAN INTERESTS	286	13
3.	GOVERNMENT	216	10
4.	ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS	339	16
5.	SPORT	97	4
6.	WEATHER	88	4
7.	CRIME AND COURTS	221	10
8.	HEALTH AND MEDICAL	52	2
9.	TRANSPORT	1	-
10.	SOCIAL CONFLICT AND WELFARE	59	3
11.	EDUCATION	12	1
12.	TATTSLOTTO	16	1
13.	MELB. IN BRIEF WORLD	22	1
14.	MELB. IN BRIEF AUSTRALIA	20	1
15.	RELIGION	15	1
16.	NEWS HEADLINES - SUMMARIES	309	14
17.	ADVERTISEMENTS	271	12
18.	OTHER	79	4
	TOTAL ITEMS	2192	100

The 125 programmes were content analysed, using a shuttle video (all the programmes were recorded on videotape). Each item was classified into a major category (Crime/Courts, Government/Politics, Economics/Business etc.), each item was timed, the method of presentation noted (newsreader, reporter, film etc.) any economic concept or item mentioned was recorded (whether it be part of Economics/Business or in another category) and the item was timed for the percentage of the total programme. (A sample of a summary code sheet is shown in Appendix 1.) The sample of 125 programmes seemed to be comprehensive and a comparison of the main events as indicated by the sample compared favourably with newspaper summaries of the main events of 1986. All the major events of 1986 were picked up in the sample programmes.

Some of the Main News Events of 1986

Seven people died when the Challenger space shuttle exploded on take-off (31 January), there was a wild car chase for the criminal Mad Max (February) Cory Aquino came to power in the Philippines, and Lindy Chamberlain was released from her Darwin jail (February).

In March there was a Royal engagement between Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson, and then on the 27th March the tragic bombing of the Russell Street Police Station in Melbourne.

There was the appearance of Halley's comet in April, the bombing of Libya by the USA on the 17th and on the 25th April the Chernobyl disaster. In April there was the Mr Justice Lionel Murphy trial and acquittal, with a judicial enquiry appointed in May.

In May Mr Keating the Federal Treasurer described Australia as a "banana republic", in June Neville Wran Premier of NSW resigned (7th), and the Prime Minister gave an address to the nation on the economic situation. The Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh was followed by the Royal Wedding (23rd July).

The Australian dollar which in February reached an all time low on the 28th July (57.15 cents in terms of the US dollar), and the convicted drug runners, Barlow and Chambers, were executed in Malaysia.

August brought the Federal budget, the fringe benefits tax. Then there was the Revkjavik Summit, the death of Lionel Murphy, the visit to Australia of the Pope, and in December the battle between Murdoch and Holmes a'Court for the Herald and Weekly Times Group.

Results

Table 5 shows the distribution of programmes and items over the categories used. The first two columns refer to the number of programmes (and percentage) where there was no coverage of the category. For example, for Economics there were 17 programmes (13.6%) in which there were no economic items. Similarly with Education only 9 programmes (8 News and 1 Current Affairs) had education items, 93% of programmes in the sample had no education item. Aside from weather - sport, Economics/Business, Crime/Courts, Human Interest and Government/Politics were the main categories. Some other data have been omitted, for example informaton on Tattslotto which only applied to one channel.

In terms of economics items, it will be seen from Tables 4 & 5 that there were 108 programmes of the 125 programmes in the sample in which there was an economics item as a major category. These 108 programmes comprised 86 News programmes and 22 Current Affairs programmes. Within these programms there were 339 major economic items (307 news items and 32 current affairs items). Clearly there were more than one economics item in many of the programmes studied.

86.4% of all programmes had some economic items within them, (13.6% or 17 programmes had no economics item within them). Economics items comprised 18.3% of total programme time.

Table 5

T.V. Items by Major Category

(Survey of 125 Programmes)

	Programmes with Nil		NEWS		CURRENT AFFAIRS	
	No.	%	No. of Programs	No. of Items	No. of Programs	No. of Items
1. ACCIDENTS	74	59.2	50	78	1	1
2. HUMAN INTEREST	16	12.8	79	244	30	47
3. GOVERNMENT-POL.	34	27.2	77	205	14	16
4. ECONOMICS	17	13.6	86	307	22	32
5. SPORT	36	28.8	89	97	-	-
6. WEATHER	37	29.6	90	90	-	-
7. CRIME - COURTS	33	26.4	81	152	10	12
8. HEALTH	78	62.4	37	42	10	10
9. TRANSPORT	124	99	-	-	1	1
10. SOCIAL CONFLICT	89	71.2	36	59	-	-
11. EDUCATION	116	93	8	11	1	1
12. ADVERTISEMENTS	50	40	51	192	24	59

Excluding segments which were categorised as Economics, there were economic items occurring within other categories.

In some cases the economic content is readily identified, in other cases there is less clarity as to how "economic" the reference may be. So the terminology of "Economics sure" has been used where the reference is clear, and whereas it is less clear the term "Economics mention" is used. "Economics sure" is used where time is spent on the economic items, where "economics mention" refers to the mention of a term or concept, but without time being spent on the item.

A proposed North to South crossing of Australia in a solar powered car was a news item on the Channel 10 news on 28 October 1986. It was the 18th item on the news and went for 1 minutes 38 seconds; and comprised 3% of the programme and classified as a human interest story. However questions of the costs of the car, costs of production and technology were raised. While they might be incidental to the main thrust of the item, they could in context be economic items. Such references were regarded as "Economics mentions".

In sections of programmes classified as Government/Politics, there were 132 economic items in 86 programmes. In other categories there were an additional 368 economic items. Of the Government/Politics economics items 28 (in 22 segments) were classified as "economics sure" and 104 (in 64 segments) were mentions of terms or concepts. Of the rest 69 items were regarded as "economics sure" and 309 were "economics mentions". In all there were 500 items associated with economics in parts of programs not classified as economics.

Typically economics items comprised 24% of the time of a programme. In two cases the economic component was 45% of programme time and in some other programmes there were no economic items.

Economics items tended to comprise 12% of news programmes and when on current affairs programmes 50%.

The average time of an economics item on a programme was 2 minutes 72 seconds (mean) with 57% of the economics items though being under two minutes in duration.

The number of separate items in any programme depended on the length of the programme and as to whether it was news or current affairs. The average in this sample was of 17.5 items a programme - but the range was considerable with two current affairs programmes having single issue programmes, and at the other extent eleven news programmes featured between 30 and 36 news items.

There tended to be 3 advertisements per half hour and six for one hour long news programmes, comprising 20% of programme time. For current affairs programmes advertisements comprised 21% of the programme time.

The order in which items were presented was also examined. Clearly the items considered most news worthy would be presented early in the programme. Table 6 shows this pattern for Economics items - which tended to be the second, third or fourth item on the programme. While only a crude indicator it is interesting that 57% of the economics items did come early in programmes.

Table 6

Order of First Economic Items in Programme

Order	Number	%	
0	17	13.6	(17 programmes had no economic item)
1	5	4.0	
2	30	24.0	
3	19	15.2	
4	18	14.4	
5	6	4.8	
6	10	8.0	
7	4	3.2	
8	2	1.6	
9	4	3.2	
10	3	2.4	
11	1	.8	
13	3	2.4	
15	2	1.6	
16	1	8	

Table 7

	% that had nothing about the item				
	SBS	Ch 7	Ch 2	Ch 9	Ch 10
1. ACCIDENT	72.2	48.5	71.4	66.7	33.3
2. HUMAN INTEREST	5.6	9.1	17.9	14.8	11.1
3. GOVERNMENT	-	42.4	14.3	37.0	27.8
4. ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS	5.6	24.2	10.7	18.5	
5. SPORT		39.4	35.7	40.7	5.6
6. WEATHER	5.6	39.4	35.7	40.7	5.6
7. CRIME AND COURTS	11.1	33.3	42.9	25.9	
8. HEALTH AND MEDICAL	61.1	63.6	60.7	77.8	38.9
9. TRANSPORT	100	97	100	100	100
10. SOCIAL CONFLICT AND WELFARE	38.9	75.8	67.9	38.9	72.2
11. EDUCATION	83.3	90.9	92.9	23.3	94.4

Table 8

Economics in programmes

	(a) % No Economics	(b) Programmes	(c) Economics Items
SBS	5.6	17	58
CHANNEL 7	24.2	25	72
CHANNEL 2	10.7	22	89
CHANNEL 9	18.5	22	52
CHANNEL 10	-	18	67

(a) Indicates the percentage of programmes with no economics item.

(b) Indicates the number of programmes in which there were economics items.

(c) Indicates the number of economics items.

Table 7 provides an overview of the categories as by the channels. Table 8 shows a breakdown of the Economics category items by channels. Channels 7 and Channels 9 having less economics content than Channels 10, SBS or 2.

Table 9 shows the Economics items by News and Current Affairs by the number of items in a programme. For example in eighteen news programs there were two economic items, in 20 news programs four economic items. The most economic item in the news was one programme with eight.

Table 9

Economics

	Nil in Programme	1 item	2 items	3 items	4 items	5 items	6 items	7 items	8 items	Total
NEWS	4	8	18	19	20	6	10	4	1	90
	% (4.4)	(8.9)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(6.7)	(11.1)	(4.4)	(1.1)	(72)
CURRENT AFFAIRS	13	14	6	2						35
	% (38.2)	(39)	(17.6)	(5.9)						(28)
										125
										(100)

In Table 10 the main 367 economic items found in this survey are analysed by the economic components involved. It uses the same categories as used in the earlier newspaper study and found in Table 1. Once again the general pattern shown in the newspaper study of the dominance of industrial relations and government issues prevails, with industrial disputes and government economic policy issues being regarded as newsworthy items.

Table 10

Economic Terms From T.V. Study by Category

		Number of Items	Proportion of Programmes in which they occurred
1.	Basic Terms and Concepts	11	9.3%
2.	Production, Consumption and Investment	58	7.6%
3.	Population and Labour	7	8.3%
4.	Industrial Relations	123	4.8%
5.	The Overseas Sector	37	4.3%
6.	Money and Finance	25	3.6%
7.	The Role of Government	64	5.8%
8.	Comparative Economic System	21	3.4%
9.	Multi concepts - unable to classify separately	21	17.9%
		367	

(The 367 economics items comprise 307 economics news items, 32 economics items in current affairs and 28 economics items in government/politics category.)

In looking at the first economics items 63.2% involved a newsreader, 64.8% a reporter, 15.2% a film component and 8.8% a studio interview/discussion. It was clear that a verbal presentation by the newsreader or a reporter was the main mode used to present economic items.

The format used for the analysis of the videotypes is shown in Appendix 1. There are two samples here, a 3rd May 1986 Channel 2 news, and a Channel 7 News for 19th November 1986. The news items are classified by major category or theme, so the first item for the 3rd -- May 1986 Channel 2 News was the report of the court case acquitting Mr Justice Lionel Murphy - this was a 21 second report and comprised 1% of the news programme. The second item relating to the election of a new Victorian Liberal Senator was classified as a Government/Politics item but the policies enunciated by the new senator covered a number of economic issues - industrial relations, smaller government expenditure and the then current economic difficulties. The third item was classified as an Economics/Business item and covered compulsory third party insurance. A graph, showing the government owned State Insurance Office losses was different in terms of presentation. In the other items of this 18 item news programme two others had economic content - item 6 on the Tokyo Summit although classified as a Government/Politics item covered the major industrial powers and US/USSR economics. Item 8 on industrial unrest at Broken Hill was a clear Economics/Business item covering the industrial relations area.

In the Channel 7 News of 19 November 1986 there was only one Economics/Business item in the 12 item programme. This item (the 6th item on that night) had a 1 minute 2 second coverage of the nurses' strike. There were references to economic terms in two other items - the lead item concerning an industrial accident, and the third item on a

school bombing in Braybrook. These samples indicate the nature of the analysis undertaken.

General observations

While this study reveals a considerable coverage of economics in news and current affairs programmes, a feature of this coverage was that in most cases the economic terms and concepts were rarely explained. The presentation assumed a considerable background knowledge of the issues. Even abbreviations were used - such as C.P.I. (meaning Consumer Price Index) which were not spelled out or explained.

Compared with newspaper news - the pressure of time on television news means a cryptic presentation making the most newsworthy use of the 2 minute slot. Television news reporting is typified by overcompressed verbal shorthand and unclear language (Harrison, 1985, p.142).

Some items seem to have been over represented. Industrial relations matters were a clear example of this - and for this sample of some of the 1986 programmes the Victorian B.L.F. (Builders Labourers Federation) registration issue and the nurses dispute took up much time. There was often repetition of material, and such disputes also had appeal to programmes in providing the opportunity for film coverage. It is interesting to note the change in the presentation of the nurses dispute. Initially the television channels were sympathetic to the nurses and took an anti-government stance. As the dispute lengthened the mood changed and an increasing number of segments appeared depicting inadequate patient care and picket line troubles.

Some stations had a specific format presenting a financial segment. For example SBS had a regular feature on the Stock Exchange. Qualitatively the economic coverage on Channel 2 seemed better than the other channels. It was better in the sense of a greater priority being

accorded to economic issues and there was more care in presenting economic terms.

On television, news and current affairs programmes are with generally regarded as a source of entertainment. Research indicates that for both adults and children, recall of news events is very poor. (Cullingford, 1984) Only items of personal relevance seem to be retained. News is not of great interest to children. While each viewer seems to have a "capacity for idiosyncratic interpretation that is almost infinite" (p.180), it is what the viewer brings to watching television that will determine what such a viewer gains (Cullingford, p.176). "Children can make what they wish out of any programme they see." Cullingford gives a picture of children watching television responding from their own clues and expectations, selecting by the associations that they possess. There is capacity for children to learn more from their exposure to television. (Cullingford, 1984, pp.187-188) So the presence of so much economics on television represents a potential for learning economics - for it would seem that such items will only properly register if linked to previous interests and understandings.

Future Work

1. These studies of economics in the news media point to the need for teachers and developers of economics curriculum to take into account the nature and range of economics concepts and terms that are being reflected in this manifestation of society. There is a wealth of opportunity in using these economics concepts in understanding society.

This study dealing with economic concepts in television news, and its predecessor of economics in a newspaper could well be replicated, with a wider range of newspapers, magazines and television programmes examined. However such studies would probably only confirm the general

proposition of the actual existence of a considerable amount of economics and range of economic issues in the media.

2. Cullingford in his research on children and television comments "The content of television is far easier to analyse than what goes on inside people's heads" (1984, p.vii). So the next step should be the complex area of response. How do young people react to these economic concepts and terms?

A small pilot study was undertaken to explore the question of received response. At a secondary girls school in suburban Melbourne sixty senior students taking economics in Years 11 & 12 participated in a short experiment. The aim was to assess their comprehension and understanding of the economics items in the news. News programmes were recorded over five nights (a different channel news each night) and the items with economics content were shown to the students next day. Test questions were constructed on the items to assess whether the students understood or did not understand the economics concept involved. The activity was used as a learning experience by the teacher concerned and after this process discussion was generated by the class.

Even in just five programmes during May 1987 revealed a considerable number of economics items were revealed. The teacher reported the following observations.

1. The students were surprised at the extent of the economic items in the news.
2. The students realised that their recall of news items was poor and short term. Many also said they tended to tune in and out of various items.
3. The students were disappointed with how few of the questions they could answer. While understanding of items related to economics dealt with in their course was good, overall they revealed a low level of understanding.

4. While much of this lack of understanding could be attributed to this exercise coming early in their course, the students commented on how little they felt items were explained. The bare statement of the item without elaboration emphasised the need for students to have more background.

While this study was exploratory only and the impressions from it treated very cautiously it does suggest that an extensive study of how young people receive these economics concepts could be profitable avenues to explore.

Acknowledgments

I would like to record my thanks to Anita Forsyth, Heather Ewart, Kirsty Williamson, Jenny Hoff, Margaret Wilson, Sharon Fitzgerald, John Fyfield and Bev Schneider for their considerable help with this project. Margaret Wilson kindly assessed her class in the small Pilot Study described. I also acknowledge with thanks a research grant from the Vice Chancellor of Monash University towards this study.

Reference Notes

Agardy, S. (1980) The News is the news: public perceptions of television news. Paper presented to ANZAAS Adelaide, South Australia, May 12-16.

Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (1978) Television and the Public: the news. Sydney.

Atwater, T. (1983) Product differentiation in local television news. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Journalism and Mass Communication.

Bell, G.J.M. and Gregory, A. (1980) Sources for Courses: A handbook for teachers of Economics. Fitzroy, VCTA Publishing.

Bonney, B. (1983) "Media and discourse", Media Information. Australia (28), pp.14-15.

Bonney, B. and Wilson, H. (1983). Australia's Commercial Media. South Melbourne, Macmillan.

Breen, M. (1983) "Television News as Drama", Media Information Australia, 29, August.

Carr, N.J. (1986) "The Take-up and Use of the Channel Four television Series A Question of Economics by Schools and Further Education Colleges". Research Papers in Economics Education. University of London, Institute of Education.

Cullingford, C. 1984 Children and Television. Aldershot: Gower Publishing.

Dunn, G.N.D. (1983) Economic understanding and economic efficacy of elementary school children. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. Monash University.

Galbraith, J.K. (1978) Almost Everyone's Guide to Economics. Penguin.

Gilbert, R. (1984) The Impotent Image. London, Falmer Press.

Gregory, A. (1982) "Using a source materials approach in Economics", Economics, 18 (77), pp.27-29.

Gregory, A. (1986) "Using the media in developing economics curricula", in S. Hodkinson and D.J. Whitehead (Eds.), Economics Education: Research and Development Issues. London, Longman, pp.220-239.

Harrison, M. (1985) T.V. News: Whose Bias? Hermitage: Policy Journals.

Lancaster (1985) "The Challenge of Kids TV", Media Information Australia (37).

Masterman, L. (1985) Teaching the Media. London: Comedia.

Mayer, H. (1984) "Children's T.V. Viewing 1977-1983: Data and Meaning", Media Information Australia, 33, August, pp.18-19.

Murdoch, G. and Phelps, G. (1973) Mass Media and the Secondary School. Schools Council Research Studies. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

McLuhan, M., Hutchon, K. and McLuhan, E. (1977) City As Classroom. Ontario, Book Society of Canada.

McNair Anderson (1984) Report of Commercial Television Audiences Aged 5-12 years and 13-17 years: Comparative date Sydney and Melbourne, Monday to Friday, Media Information Australia, 33, August, 1984, pp.21-27.

Rubin, B. (1985) When Information Counts: grading the media. Massachusetts: Lexington.

Russell, A.L. (1985) "Adolescent and Adult Responses to a Media News Report", Media Information Australia (37), pp.45-54.

Saunders, P., Bach, G.L., Calderwood, J.D. & Hansen, W.L. (1984) Master Curriculum Guide in Economics: a Framework for Teaching The Basic Concepts. Second Edition: New York: Joint Council on Economic Education.

Smith, A. (1973) The Shadow in the Cave. London: Allen & Unwin.

Sumner, H. (1987) Audience Response to Economics Content in Television programmes. Paper to Economics Association Seminar, Manchester.

Tunstall, J. (1983) The Media in Britain. London: Constable.

Weisbrod, B.A. (1978) "Research on Economic Education: Is it asking the Right Questions?" in Discussion paper No. 510-78. Wisconsin University Madison, Institute for Research on Poverty.

Title: A.B.C. News (Channel 2) **Date:** MAY 1986

Item No.	General theme of the item	Method of media presentation and time taken	Specific economic concepts mentioned	Total length of item	Item as a % of total program	Comments
	Headlines			20 sec.	1	
1.	Crime/courts (Lionel Murphy acquitted of charges yet pressure to resign)			21 sec.	1	
2.	Govt./Politics (New Senator elected for liberal party)	Newsreader (23 secs.) Reporter (1 min 10 sec.)	- promote smaller govt, new industrial relations policy federal election. - senate election, industrial relations reform, current economic difficulties reduce size Govt. and expenditure, private sector, public sector, liberal leadership.	1 min 33 sec	5	
3.	Economics and Business (Compulsory Third Party Insurance)	Newsreader (28 sec.)	- compulsory Third Party Insurance, State Govt., reform of Motor Accident Compensation systemm, Premier, risk-based premiums.	2 min 9 sec.	7	
		Reporter (1 min 41 sec.)	-Road Traffic Authority cost, compensation, compulsory Third Party liabilities, State Treasurer, expensive litigation, 'no fault' system.			Graph S.I.O. losses for 1982-86
			Third Party Reform, Work Care System 'lump sum' settlements, Premier, "class of vehicle"			
4.	Human Interest (N.A.S.A.: another launch failure of weather satellite)	32		1 min 16 sec.	4	33

Title: **Date:**

Item No.	General theme of the item	Method of media presentation and time taken	Specific economic concepts mentioned	Total length of item	Item as a % of total program	Comments
5.	Social Conflict (Bombing of Sri Lankan air liner at Columbo airport)			1 min 51 sec.	6	
6.	Govt/Politics Tokyo Summit)	Newsreader (27 sec.) Reporter (1 min. 38 sec.)	- major industrial powers, economics, - economic matters, economics U.S. politics, "soviet bashing"	2 min 5 sec.	7	
7.	Accident (Chernobyl disaster)			1 min 28 sec.	5	
8.	Economics and Business (Industrial unrest at Broken Hill)	Newsreader (15 sec.)	- jobs, mine workers, work practises, Barrier Industrial Council, Mining Co. unemployment.			
		Reporter (1 min 35 sec.)	- meetings, industrial history, economic future, employers, work conditions, viability of mines, employees, "sackings" "the dole", high costs, price, retrenchment.	1 min 50 sec.	6	
9.	Health/Medical (Arthritis sufferers in Victoria).			56 sec.	3	

Title:

Date:

Item No.	General theme of the item	Method of media presentation and time taken	Specific economic concepts mentioned	Total length of item	Item as a % of total program	Comments
10.	Govt/Politics. (Austrian Presidential elections)			1 min 31 sec.	5	
11.	Social Conflict (car bomb in Clady, North Ireland)			56 sec	3	
12.	Social Conflict (students clash with police in Sth. Korea.)			35 sec.	2	
13.	Social Conflict (Sth. Africa: tear gas used in funeral violence of blacks near Port Elizabeth)			16 sec.	1	
14.	Religion (Sikh's holiest shrine - "The Pubjab".)			25 sec.	1	
15.	Human Interest (snow ski safety campaign)			1 min 43 sec.	6	

Item: **Date:**

Item No.	General theme of the item	Method of media presentation and time taken	Specific economic concepts mentioned	Total length of item	Item as a % of total program	Comments
16.	Sport- Football (V.F.L.) - " (V.F.A.) - Soccer - Marathon Run			4 min 18 sec.	14	
17.	Weather			2 min 34 sec.	9	
18.	Summary of News May Day March		Workers, unions	3 min 53 sec.	14	

Title: Seven National News

Date: 19th November, 1986.

Item No.	General Theme of the item	Method of media presentation and time taken	Specific economic concepts mentioned	Total length of item	Item as a % of total program	Comments
	Headlines			26 sec.	1	
1.	Accident (Explosion & fire at Sydney chemical factory)		Workers, money value of damage, costs.	1 min. 22 sec.	4	
2.	Other (Bomb alert- uncertainty whether car dumped near Turkish consulate was filled with explosives)			2 min 21 sec.	8	
3.	Crime/Courts (Petrol bombing of Braybrook home.)		Relative poverty in Melb.	1 min 22 sec.	4	
4.	Crime/Courts (Man was shot whilst sleeping in Melton)			42 sec.	2	
5.	Accident (Level-crossing accident in N.E. Victoria)			48 sec.	3	
6.	Economics and Business (Trouble at nurses picket line)	Newsreader (11 sec.) Reporter (51 sec.)	nurses industrial dispute, strike, picket line R.A.N.F., demonstrators	1 min 2 sec.	3	

10

11

Title: **Date:**

Item No.	General theme of the item	Method of media presentation and time taken	Specific economic concepts mentioned	Total length of item	Item as a % of total program	Comments
7.	Religion (Pope left Melbourne for Darwin)			2 min 38 sec.	9	
8.	Human Interest (Lysterfield Lake Park opened)	Newsreader (10 sec.) Reporter (59 sec.)	-State conservation, Lands and Forests Minister, State Treasurer money, State Govt. Funding.	1 min 9 sec.	4	
	News still to come			11 sec.	1	
	Advertisements			2 min	7	
9.	Sport - Cricket - Golf - Tennis - Surfing - Horse Racing			5 mins 3 sec.	17	
	Advertisements			2 min	7	
10.	Sport - Horse Racing			4 min 27 sec.	15	
	Advertisements			2 min	7	
11.	Weather			1 min 33 sec.	5	
12.	Summary			56 sec.	3	